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DE RUEHTA #1246/01 1930334

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 110334Z JUL 08

FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2739

INFO RUCNCLS/SCA COLLECTIVE

RUEHAST/USOFFICE ALMATY 0549

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ASTANA 001246

STATE FOR INL/AAE, G/TIP, SCA/CEN (O'MARA)

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: MEDIA REPORTS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES FROM FEBRUARY TO JUNE

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¶1. The following is a summary of human trafficking cases reported in local newspapers from February to June 2008.

UZBEKISTANIS IN KAZAKHSTAN

¶2. March 14, Interfax: Uzbekistani and Kazakhstani police jointly dismantled an organized smuggling ring illegally bringing Uzbeks to Kazakhstan. A group of 15 to 20 workers were transported from Karakalpakistan in northwest Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan to work in construction and agriculture. Traffickers arranged illegal border crossings for the workers, took their passports, and paid them no salary. Interfax reported that, in the last three years, police in Uzbekistan received over 1,000 reports of human trafficking and conducted 700 investigations.

¶3. May 23, Express-K: Police detained an Uzbekistani from Mangystau who organized a brothel in Aktau. The 26-year-old madam recruited her girls from Uzbekistan to work in Aktau as waitresses. Upon arrival in Aktau, the girls' passports were taken and they were forced to prostitute themselves. The investigation is continuing and a criminal case will be initiated.

¶4. June 4, Vremya: Fifteen citizens of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 16 to 45 years old were rescued by police from a meat-processing plant in Aman-Karagai near Kostanai, where they were held by a businessman from Atyrau. The workers were not paid and those who wanted to leave were charged \$300. A relative of four of the workers was asked to pay \$600 for their release and went to the police, which set up a sting operation and arrested the businessmen. There was evidence that the victims were regularly beaten. The investigation is ongoing.

¶5. June 10, Argumenti & Facti (AiF): After the death of her husband, a pregnant woman came from Uzbekistan with two children to find employment. At the border she was offered assistance in crossing and in finding a job. She was forced to work as a prostitute for four months until her mother reported her missing to a local NGO. Police found and released the woman, who reported that other women were being held against their will in Shymkent. The women lived in small rooms with no heat, separated from each other by bars. Many of the women were reportedly sick. During interviews with the police, the women were fearful and unwilling to testify against the traffickers. Many claimed they were voluntarily working as prostitutes.

¶6. June 10, AiF: The parents of an Uzbekistani boy arranged an excursion for their son to travel to Shymkent, Kazakhstan. When the boy did not return after a week, his mother called the police. The boy was found working in a construction crew in Shymkent with dozens of men. None of the workers had passports and all were working in Kazakhstan illegally. The father of the boy refused to make a written statement to Kazakhstani police and said he would do so in Uzbekistan.

INTERNAL CHILD LABOR

¶7. April 2, Liter: A 17-year-old from the Ushtobe orphanage in the Almaty Oblast was forced to work long hours on a farm owned by a relative of the orphanage's director. The director promised to pay the boy for his work but never did. The boy fled the farm several times but was returned by the director and forced to work. The prosecutors initiated a criminal case against the director who said he did not know the boy was working for his relatives. As a result, the director was fired and was ordered to pay nine months' salary of \$700 to the boy.

¶8. May 22, Akmolinskaya Pravda. A student at the Kokshetau lyceum was beaten and found with several injuries including a broken nose in the railway station in Lobanovo. The boy said that in September 2007 he met a retiree from Lobanovo who invited him to his home to help around the house. The retiree held him in the home for two weeks forcing him to do different types of work including unloading six tons of coal. The lyceum did not take any action to identify the location of missing student. Prosecutors stated that this was not the only case and several other students were released from the school to unknown persons based on written requests.

INTERNAL LABOR TRAFFICKING

¶9. February 14, Interfax: Police in Karaganda detained the owner of a farm suspected in kidnapping and exploiting a local villager. A 42-year-old resident of Volnyi escaped the farm, where he was detained and forced to work for three years, and went to the police. He said that he was also regularly beaten by his captor. The farm

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owner was arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

¶10. February 21, Aif: A 31-year-old man was kidnapped from the Badam train station near Shymkent. Two men attempted to rob him and, after finding he had no valuables, beat him. An apparent uniformed police officer arrived shortly after the attack and offered to assist the victim and help him find a job. The man was taken to a farm where he worked with a young man from Uzbekistan who did not speak Russian. After the Uzbekistani fled the farm, he was replaced by another young man. Three months later, the two escaped the farm together, but refused to report the incident to the police.

¶11. April 11, Kazpravda: Three defendants are standing trial in the "Chagan case," accused of forcing homeless people to work in the village of Chagan. Men were put to work demolishing abandoned buildings and women were preparing salvaged blocks and bricks for sale. The traffickers recruited the homeless by asking them to help unload furniture for money. They were taken to Chagan and held by means of force. An unknown number of the workers died. The rescued workers made statements to the police.

SEXUAL TRAFFICKING

¶12. February 22, Interfax: Four girls were trafficked from Temirtau to China through fraudulent means by a 26-year-old man who forced them into prostitution and the production of pornography in Urumchi. After being held several days, the girls were able to call their mothers in Temirtau who reported the situation to the police. When the police detained the trafficker, he attempted to bribe them. The trafficker was charged with several crimes, including trafficking in persons and bribing an official. Police foresee finding more victims in the course of their investigation. Various newspapers have reported as many as 12 victims discovered so far, however media estimates vary.

¶13. March 19, Interfax: Police in Almaty rescued a 22-year-old girl, who was sexually exploited for several months. The girl was

discovered during a police operation when a madam attempted to sell her for \$500 at a hotel. A few days earlier, during the "Stop-Trafficking" operation in Ust-Kamenogorsk, the police was discovered the sexual exploitation of a 17-year-old girl by a 31-year-old trafficker who offered her services to his friends.

¶14. March 19, Izvestia-K: Three female traffickers were convicted in March by a Shymkent court for forcing a 17-year-old girl from the South-Kazakhstan Oblast into prostitution. In 2007, the girl was held against her will for several months and often physically abused by her captors. During the trial, evidence of extensive physical injuries was presented. One trafficker was sentenced to seven years in prison; the others were sentenced to 5 years with postponement until their children reach the age of 14.

¶15. March 28, Liter: The regional court of Zhambyl Oblast reevaluated the sentencing of 5 defendants sentenced to 1 to 3 years' imprisonment in December 2007 by the Shu court. Not satisfied with court's decision, a Taraz-based NGO, with the support of the MVD and Presidential Administration, appealed for longer sentences. As a result, the traffickers received 10 to 12 years in prison and are currently serving time. The traffickers were found guilty of transporting under-aged girls from Shu Village to Almaty where they forced them to work as prostitutes.

¶16. April 11, Express-K: Traffic police stopped a car after seeing a young girl jump out of it. She told police that she had been persuaded to go to Astana to work as a waitress. The girl said she only later understood, after hearing the conversation between the driver and other passenger in the car, that she would be forced to work as a prostitute. When the car slowed down to pass through a police checkpoint, she jumped from the car. As part of the investigation, police have discovered that several other girls from rural areas were transported to Astana with offers to work as waitresses, maids, and shop assistants, but the girls were actually sold to pimps for prices ranging from \$50 to \$100 each. Girls as young as 16 years old were trafficked. The investigation is ongoing.

¶17. May 6, Interfax: Police in Shymkent are investigating the owner of a cafe, her assistant and two policemen after receiving a report from a young woman. She stated that she was released from a brothel in Almaty to attend college, was sold to a pimp by her landlady and was regularly beaten for two weeks before she began working as a prostitute. Her first client called her parents and the police. A criminal case was initiated against the owner of the brothel.

¶19. June 10, Interfax: A 14-year-old Kyrgyzstani girl was rescued from a brothel in Almaty after working as a prostitute for several months. The girl was trafficked into Kazakhstan and sold to a brothel for \$250 by a 33-year-old Kyrgyz woman and the woman's friend. The traffickers were arrested and the criminal case is ongoing.

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